

Poliomyelitis (aka, Polio)

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Poliomyelitis is caused by a virus. Polio typically produces weakening of the muscles, sometimes to the point of requiring assistance to move about. The illness ranges widely in severity.

Who gets this disease?

Today, polio cases occur mainly among unimmunized young children or member of groups that refuse immunization.

How is it spread?

The virus is spread by direct contact with infected stool and throat secretions. Infected persons are most contagious during the first few days before and after onset of symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

The illness ranges in severity from a mild, unnoticed febrile illness to meningitis (an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord), to paralysis and even death.

How can the spread of this disease be prevented?

Two types of polio vaccine have been available: trivalent oral polio virus vaccine (TOPV) and inactivated polio vaccine (IPV). The National Immunization Practices Advisory Committee (ACIP) recommends four doses of polio vaccine. The first at 2 months and the second at four months. The third dose is given at 6-18 months of age. A booster is given at school entry between the ages of 4-6 years.

Who should be excluded?

Children and staff should be excluded during the acute phase of illness.

Reportable?

Yes, Poliomyelitis is reportable by New Hampshire law.